

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, IT, PFOR
SUBJECT: PRI SECRETARY'S VIEWS ON ITALIAN POLITICAL ISSUES

SUMMARY: IN A RECENT CONVERSATION, PRI SECRETARY BIASINI EXPRESSED THE FOLLOWING VIEWS ON THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE: PCI LOSSES IN RECENT ELECTIONS ARE PRIMARILY DUE TO ITS GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SINCE 1975 AND ITS FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO ITS LONG-PROMISED SOLUTIONS FOR VIRTUALLY ALL OF ITALY'S PROBLEMS. PSI UNITY IS FRAGILE AND THE PSI COULD BE A TROUBLESOME AND DESTABILIZING ELEMENT IN THE COMING MONTHS. A GOVERNMENTAL CRISIS IS UNLIKELY BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN DECEMBER. THE NEW PRESIDENT WILL PROBABLY BE A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT. IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL BE FOLLOWED BY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS NEXT SPRING OR EARLY SUMMER. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A RECENT CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR AND POLITICAL COUNSELOR, REPUBLICAN PARTY SECRETARY ODDO BIASINI MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON ITALIAN POLITICAL ISSUES:

2. RECENT ELECTIONS - BIASINI WAS OBVIOUSLY VERY PLEASED WITH HIS OWN PARTY'S GAINS IN THE RECENT LOCAL ELECTIONS, BUT
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CLEARLY BELIEVES THAT PCI'S POOR PERFORMANCE WAS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THOSE ELECTIONS. HE SAID THAT, WHILE ERRORISM AND THE MORO KIDNAPPING HAD SOME EFFECT ON THE COMMUNIST AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC VOTE, THE PRINCIPAL OPERATIVE FACTOR TO EXPLAIN PCI LOSSES IS THE FACT THAT THE PCI HAS BEEN MADE CO-RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES AND ACTIONS. THE ELECTORAL RESULTS ARE PROOF THAT THE STRATEGY OF BRINGING

THE PCI FIRST INTO THE "GOVERNMENT OF ABSTENTIONS" AND NOT INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY WAS A CORRECT ONE. IT HAS DEPRIVED THEM OF THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING IN THE OPPOSITION AND MADE PEOPLE SEE THAT THEY HAVE NO MAGIC SOLUTIONS FOR THE COUNTRY'S ILLS. THEIR EXTENSIVE INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SINCE 1975 HAS ALSO MADE THE SAME POINT.

3. THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI): BIASINI PREFACED HIS REMARKS ON THIS SUBJECT BY SAYING THAT THEY WERE PROBABLY NOT OBJECTIVE AND, INDEED, THE LEVEL OF IRRITATION BETWEEN THE PSI AND PRI HAS BEEN RATHER HIGH IN RECENT MONTHS. FOR BIASINI, THE APPARENT NEWLY FOUND UNITY WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS MORE APPARENT THAN REAL. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR A PARTY TO GO FROM CHAOS TO REAL UNITY IN PRESENT DAY ITALY IN A PERIOD OF A FEW MONTHS. THE PSI ALSO CONTINUES TO SUFFER FROM ITS INABILITY TO FORMULATE ANY COHERENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM. ITS INABILITY STEMS FROM THE WIDESPREAD IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT THAT IS CURRENTLY HIDDEN BY THE APPARENT UNITY THAT CRAXI HAS ACHIEVED. THE TEMPTATION TOWARD ADVENTURISM ON THE LEFT IS ALSO A MATTER FOR GREAT CONCERN. THE PSI HAS DURING THE PAST YEAR OR TWO REPEATEDLY ATTEMPTED TO JUMP TO THE LEFT OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND PICK UP SUPPORT FROM DISCONTENTED EXTREMIST AND RADICAL ELEMENTS. THE PSI'S CURRENT POSITION ON THE LEGGE REALE REFERENDUM, IN WHICH THE PSI LEAVES TO ITS ELECTORATE'S CONSCIENCE THE DECISION TO VOTE FOR OR AGAINST THE REFERENDUM IS BUT THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF THIS TENDENCY TO ADVENTURISM ON THE LEFT. THE REPUBLICAN PARTY
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IS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THE TEMPTATION IN BOTH THE PSI AND THE DC TO FORM A NEW COALITION AND FORCE THE PCI BACK INTO OPPOSITION. SUCH A COALITION WOULD NOT WORK NOW FOR MANY REASONS NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THAT THE PSI DOES NOT HAVE THE ORGANIZATIONAL UNITY AND SINGLENES OF PURPOSE REQUIRED. IN ADDITION, TO PUSH THE PCI BACK INTO OPPOSITION WOULD BE A POLITICAL MISTAKE AT THIS TIME AND WOULD HAMSTRING ANY GOVERNMENT THAT COULD BE FORMED.

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4. THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS - WHILE THERE WILL BE ENDLESS PROBLEMS AND CRIES OF ALARM AND IMPENDING DISASTER, IT NOW APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE ANY GOVERNMENT CRISIS BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC IN DECEMBER. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHO WILL BE ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC IT NOW APPEARS PROBABLE THAT IT WILL BE A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAVE THREE CANDIDATES: FANFANI, ANDREOTTI, AND ZACCAGNINI. THE ONE THAT IS LIKELY TO BE BEST FOR THE COUNTRY, HOWEVER SURPRISING IT MAY SEEM, IS FANFANI. HE, UNLIKE ANDREOTTI, IS A PARTY MAN AND COULD, IF PRESIDENT, GET THE SUPPORT AND RESPECT OF THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY. HE COULD ALSO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY. FANFANI IS NOT THE IDEAL CANDIDATE BECAUSE OF HIS MERCURIAL, TEMPERAMENTAL CHARACTER AND BECAUSE HE HAS CHANGED POLITICAL COLORATION SO MANY TIMES, BUT HE'S PROBABLY THE BEST OF THOSE NOW BEING TALKED ABOUT. FOR THE OTHER PARTIES, THE ONLY POSSIBLE CANDIDATE IS THE SOCIALIST "DARK HORSE" GIOLITTI, WHO IN FACT HAS LITTLE CHANCE. LA MALFA IS NOT A CANDIDATE. ONCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE OVER, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT THEY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS NEXT SPRING OR EARLY SUMMER.

5. LA MALFA - WHILE CLEARLY AND FIRMLY INDICATING HIS LOYALTY TO
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THE PRI'S LEADER, UGO LA MALFA, BIASINI MADE CLEAR THA HE DOES NOT NECESSARILY AGREE WITH LA MALFA ON ALL ISSUES. IN PARTICULAR, HE DOES NOT SHARE LA MALFA'S CURRENT BENIGN VIEW OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND WAS PERSONNALLY OPPOSED TO LA MALFA'S CALL FOR AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT (TO INCLUDE THE COMMUNISTS) LAST NOVEMBER. HE DOES SUPPORT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY FOR THE REASONS STATED IN PARA. 2 ABOVE BUT BELIEVES IT WOULD BE A GREAT MISTAKE TO BRING THEM INTO ANY GOVERNMENT FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES SHOULD DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENCOURAGE THE "EVOLUTION/ OF THE PCI TOWARD WESTERN DEMOCRACY. BIASINI FOUND ENCOURAGING THE FACT THAT BERLINGUER RECENTLY TRAVELLED TO SPAIN TO MEET WITH CARRILLO. THAT TRIP REPRESENTS, HE HOPES,

AN EFFORT BY BERLINGUER TO DEMONSTRATE HIS DESIRE TO HAVE THE
PCI MOVE TOWARD A POSITION OF AUTONOMY FROM THE SOVIET UNION OF
THE KIND THAT CARRILLO HAS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED.

6. TRIP TO UNITED STATES - BIASINI HAS ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS
DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO VISIT THE
UNITED STATES AGAIN. HE WAS A LEADER GRANTEE IN 1960 AND HAS NOT
BEEN TO THE US SINCE THEN. THE AMBASSADOR ENCOURAGED HIM TO GO.
BIASINI SAID THAT ONCE THE PRI CONGRESS, NOW SCHEDULED FOR
MID-JUNE, IS FINISHED, HE WILL SERIOUSLY CONSIDER ORGANIZING
A VISIT. GARDNER

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